

Day of celebration Earth Day



Africa and Southeast Asia.

THE first Earth Day, organized in 1970 in the United States, launched the modern environmental movement. Some 20 million Americans took to the streets, parks, and auditoriums to decry trends toward increased pollution and deterioration, and to demonstrate for a healthy, sustainable environment. Rising environmental awareness during that period led the US government to establish the Environmental Protection Agency in late 1970, and to enact ground-breaking legislation, the Clean Air Act of 1970 and Clean Water Act of 1972.

Under President Obama, the US has done more to reduce greenhouse gas emissions than ever before, setting domestic policies that advance clean energy and climate security and vigorously engaging in climate change negotiations. Last December in Copenhagen, world leaders agreed on the Copenhagen Accord, which requires actions by all major economies to mitigate climate change; transparency to see that those actions are taken; and financing and technology support for the poorest and most vulnerable nations. The US will join a global effort to mobilize by financing to help countries adapt to climate change, including preventing deforestation in regions with tropical forests, such as in Central and South America, Central

Similarly, the US is dedicated to improving access to clean water. In 2005, our Congress passed the Paul Simon Water for the Poor Act, which makes access to safe water and sanitation for developing countries a specific policy objective of our foreign assistance programs. As Secretary Clinton stated on World Water Day exactly one month ago, "It's not every day you find an issue where effective diplomacy and development will allow you to save millions of lives, feed the hungry, empower women, advance our national security interests, protect the environment, and demonstrate to billions of people that the United States cares, cares about you and your welfare. Water is that issue." To advance this goal, the United States will strengthen developing country capacity, engage diplomatically, invest in infrastructure, increase the role of science and technology, and leverage partnerships.

This year the world is commemorating the International Year of Biodiversity. The United States is no stranger to the risk of biodiversity loss. In the 1960s, our national symbol — the American bald eagle — was on the brink of extinction. In 2007, it was taken off the endangered species list as a result of conservation efforts mandated by the Endangered Species Act of 1973 and efforts to restrict harmful pesticides. More than 27 % of the land area in the United States is afforded some form of federal protection, through a variety of programs, such as the National Park System, the National Wildlife Refuge System, the National Marine Sanctuaries Program, and the National Forest System. The Lacey Act, originally passed in 1900, stands as the oldest conservation law in the United States and is testimony to our success in conserving wildlife resources including illegally harvested plants and trees.

As US Ambassador to Kuwait, I am interested in promoting green initiatives here as well. Kuwait and the US share an interest in improving our environmental impact, and we face some of the same challenges. A main challenge will be to meet the world's growing power needs while minimizing the impact on the planet. Organizations such as the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) and the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) are conducting research on alternative energy. KFAS's recent forum on Perspectives on Energy and Climate Forum reflects Kuwait's continued commitment to the environment and its ecosystem. And we are looking at ways to improve scientist to scientist cooperation on these issues.

On the commercial side, American companies have technology that can help Kuwait meet these goals. Respected American companies in Kuwait such as Tetrattech and CH2MHill have shown their commitment to participating in

environmental protection by supplying oil cleanup and water treatment technology. They are joined by a dozen other quality US environmental leaders, including Earthsoft, IMBTEC , E&PA , and IHS who have active representatives in the State of Kuwait. In addition, the American Business Council of Kuwait (ABCK) has formed an Environmental Focus Group that, at its upcoming May meeting, will focus on "Green Business is Good Business."

As a generous provider of foreign humanitarian and development assistance, I applaud Kuwait for its continued efforts to improve the quality of life for those in need, particularly in the Arab and Muslim world. I hope Kuwait will partner with the United States and others in the international community to use such assistance to focus on the importance of access to safe drinking water, and on the broader goals of reducing pollution and building a more healthy and sustainable environment.

Each of us can make a personal commitment to do our part as individuals to help protect the environment. I urge you to join the more than one billion people in 190 countries who are taking action for Earth Day to create a global green economy. My own Embassy, in collaboration with the Kuwait Municipality and the Kuwait Voluntary Work Center, has organized a Beach Cleanup Day from 9:00 to 11:00 am on Saturday, April 24th, starting at Green Island on Gulf Road and going to the McDonald's just after the Corniche Club on Gulf Road. I invite you to join us. We wish to thank the Kuwait Municipality for providing support and volunteers for the Cleanup, without which the event would not be possible.

Today, our planet needs international dedication and commitment to preserve and protect the earth's resources-be they air, water, plant, or animal. We were reminded last week, with the eruption of Iceland's Eyjafjallajokull volcano that Mother Nature can play a disruptive as well as a positive role in the global economy and the movement of our daily lives. We cannot afford to neglect our shared home, Planet Earth. So even as we take time to recognize our achievements, we should not lose sight of the challenges that remain, and continue to build upon the legacy of the modern environmental movement started forty years ago.

By: Deborah K. Jones US Ambassador